

## POLICY ON SHARING INFORMATION ABOUT CHILD CLIENTS WITH COURTS\*

When a family is confronted by parental separation or divorce, it is very difficult on everyone. It is particularly difficult on children. When the parental relationship is unsafe, it is even more important that therapy offers a safe environment. Therapeutic safety is particularly endangered when a child has to worry that what he or she says in therapy will be revealed in court and used against one of his or her parents. In order to protect that safety, I want us all to agree that the therapist will not be called as a witness by either party. Everyone needs to understand that a judge may decide not to honor this agreement and that I may be required to be a witness, although I will try to prevent that from happening.

You should be aware that once we start treatment, it is unethical for me to give any opinions about parental fitness, child custody, or visitation arrangements, even if I am compelled to be a witness.

I want your permission to provide information to anyone who the court appoints to perform a custody evaluation or to represent the legal interests of your children. I will not make any recommendation about the final decision.

---

Parent Signature

---

Date

---

Parent Signature

---

Date

---

Therapist's Signature

---

Date

---

Witness

---

Date

---

\*Adapted by permission from J. Younggren. (2006, April 21). *Legal and Ethical Risks and Risk Management in Professional Psychological Practice: Risk Management in Specific High Risk Areas*. American Psychological Association Insurance Trust (APAIT) ethics workshop presented at the Georgia Psychological Association, Atlanta, GA.